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Shoreline

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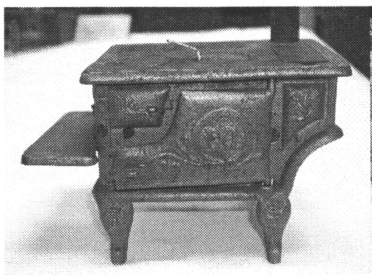
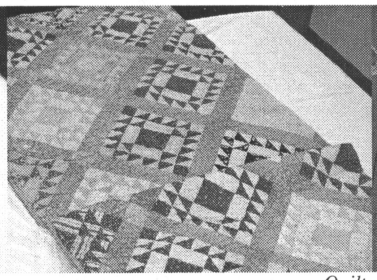
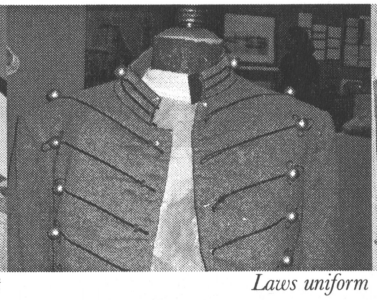
The Wicomico Historical Society Collection



Toy stove



Quilt



Laws uniform

Orphanage poster

During the summer months, Nabb staff members David Ranzan, Donna Messick and Heather Burnham, along with student volunteer Robert Graham, have been busily accessioning hundreds of objects from the Wicomico Historical Society collection. Over the years, the collection had a variety of venues. Originally housed in the basement of Holloway Hall, it was then moved to a home on Gay Street in Salisbury, still later to a large barn on the Albert Morris farm outside Salisbury and then finally to the Heritage Center at Pemberton Hall Park. Now, in a way, the collection—or at least parts of it—has come full circle, as much of the collection is once again housed on the campus of Salisbury University, this time in the basement of Blackwell Library.

Sorting through boxes of materials, all of which had to be re-accessioned along with descriptions of each object and photographic identification, the staff did preliminary research to make certain that objects were correctly identified and that an age and, if possible, provenance were provided for each object. A more thorough search will be completed once the materials all have been removed from the Heritage Center and re-housed in various Nabb/Blackwell spaces. As a part of the accessioning process, staff are trying to identify the original owners of the materials in the collection and to assign those individual's names to their collections.

Along the way, a wealth of objects have been identified which help us understand the material culture of various periods. From hand-fashioned mousetraps to high-style crystal and china, each box has given meaning to the importance of objects in identifying and helping us understand the culture of past generations. The sizeable agricultural collections of Claude and Marion Blades and of Robert Withey, which contain a vintage oxen-drawn plow as well as hilling hoes, dung rakes, scythes, a sickle and a host of other agricultural equipment, open up a new vista for an understanding of Colonial agriculture. For researchers, these objects are of great value, since Colonial inventories almost always contained these agricultural tools.

Another set of tools are the Dashiell and Booth carpentry implements, including a variety of saws, axes, froes, augers, adzes and finishing tools. Again, one could almost re-create a Colonial inventory from these objects. Primitive candle molds, "Betty" lamps and kerosene lamps demonstrate the changing lighting technology of Delmarva Peninsula households.

An extensive doll and toy collection from the late 19th and early 20th centuries provides insight into the increasing wealth of Delmarva families with increasing leisure time—a new concept with the advent of Victorian wealth. Some of the dolls have complete trousseaus. A host of wooden toys from the Morris-Harcum-Kennerly family shows the variety and beauty of the craftsmanship of the time.

Clothing from the mid-19th through the mid-20th centuries show changing fashions as does a wonderful collection of images from *Godey's Lady's Books* of the 1860s. Just as exciting is the large collection of household tools which were used throughout the Colonial period and into the 19th century for making clothing. Spinning wheels, flax brakes, swinglers, hackles and niddy-noddys used in the making of linen cloth as well as wool shears, wool cards, and a loom and shuttles used for textile manufacture all attest to the back-breaking labor involved in the creation of a simple piece of fabric during the pre-industrial period on the Eastern Shore.

Businesses are represented in a host of ways from store ledgers to objects which would have been found in Main Street Salisbury stores. L.W. Gunby Hardware Store, Ulman's Furniture Store, Homer White's Store and the Kennerly clothing and hat store are just a few examples that reflect the growing business life of Salisbury at the end of the 19th century.

A wealth of photographs provide views of the changing scenes of Salisbury—from the mid-19th century images of Civil War era, through the disastrous fire of 1886, to a dangerous snow storm in the last years of the 19th century, to the breaking of the dam at Humphreys Lake, continuing well into the 20th century. These visual documentations of Salisbury and the region surrounding the growing city provide a series of invaluable images which help bring from the shadows a long-gone period. Maps, gazetteers and personal correspondence provide additional valuable insights into the past.

The Wicomico Historical Society collection will be mined by students for historical research and by Nabb staff and volunteers for continuing exhibits which reflect the many faces of Salisbury and Wicomico County. It is a great treasure for Nabb and for Delmarva!